

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 NEW DE 04102 261411Z

43

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-20 NSC-07 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00

RSC-01 PRS-01 DRC-01 /053 W  
----- 090012

R 261230Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0479

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 4102

FOL CALCUTTA TEL RPTD FYI

QUOTE

R 250930Z MAR 74

FM AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

TO RUSBAE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 9133

INFO RUSBAY/AMCONSUL BOMBAY 2047

RUSBAS/AMCONSUL MADRAS 1968

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, IN, US

SUBJ: ASSAM: TRIP REPORT

1. SUMMARY: WE FINALLY MADE IT TO ASSAM ON AN OFFICIAL TRIP, MARCH 15-22. WE WERE TREATED EXCEEDINGLY HOSPITABLY ON THE WHOLE ALTHOUGH THE CHIEF MINISTER DID NOT MAKE HIMSELF AVAILABLE TO US AND A COUPLE OF DISTRICT OFFICIALS WERE NERVOUS AND UNCOMMUNICATIVE. WE VISITED TWO DISTRICTS WHICH, ACCORDING TO OUR RECORDS, AMERICAN OFFICIALS HAVE NOT SEEN SINCE BEFORE THE 1962 CHINA WAR. THERE ARE A HANDFUL OF AMERICAN BAPTIST MISSIONARIES IN ASSAM BUT MOST ARE ON THEIR WAY OUT. GIVEN THE USEFULNESS OF THE VISIT (NOTWITHSTANDING WHAT THE PATRIOT WILL NO DOUBT HAVE TO SAY ABOUT IT),  
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PAGE 02 NEW DE 04102 261411Z

WE WANT TO VISIT OTHER PARTS OF THE NORTHEAST AND ARE POUCHING

APPLICATIONS FOR A VISIT TO TRIPURA AND MANIPUR FOR  
SUBMISSION TO THE GOI. END SUMMARY.

2. I SPENT THE PAST WEEK IN ASSAM WITH MCCORMACK,  
BURLEIGH AND RANJIT CHAUDHURI. WE TRAVELLED MOSTLY IN THE  
CENTRAL PORTION OF THE STATE, ALONG THE BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER,  
MADE A BRIEF FORAY INTO MEGHALAYA (TO MEET GOVERNOR SINGH  
WHO SITS IN SHILLONG, NOW IN MEGHALAYA), AND VISITED THE  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CACHAR WHICH IS BENGALI-DOMINATED  
AND HAS JUST ELECTED THE FIRST ASSAMESE NON-CONGRESS MP TO  
THE LOK SABHA (CALCUTTA 0391).

3. THIS WAS OUR FIRST OFFICIAL VISIT TO ASSAM SINCE BURLEIGH'S  
TRIP IN OCTOBER 1972. IT WAS THE FIRST TIME AN AMERICAN  
CONSUL GENERAL HAD BEEN IN ASSAM IN OVER THREE YEARS.

4. A REMARKABLE FEATURE WAS THAT WE WERE PERMITTED TO GO  
NORTH OF THE BRAHMAPUTRA (TO TEZPUR, WITHIN THIRTY MILES  
OF THE DEEPEST CHINESE THRUST IN 1962, AND ALONG THE  
NORTH BANK BY ROAD, TO GAUHATI) AND TO TROUBLE-PRONE  
CACHAR. (IN THE SILCHAR AIRPORT, THE ONLY POSTER ON THE IAC  
COUNTER WAS ONE LABELED "SILOUETTES OF CHINESE AIRCRAFT:  
LEARN THEM) TO OUR KNOWLEDGE THAT IS FURTHER NORTH  
AND FURTHER EAST THAN ANY AMERICAN OFFICIAL HAS BEEN ALLOWED  
TO GO IN MORE THAN A DECADE.

5. WE WERE RECEIVED WITH GREAT CORDIALITY BY THE GOVERNOR  
(HE PRESIDES OVER FIVE STATES AND RESIDES IN SHILLONG),  
THE CHIEF SECRETARY, MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE, HEALTH/  
FAMILY PLANNING AND INDUSTRIES AND, WITH SOME NERVOUSNESS,  
BY LOCAL DEPUTY COMMISSIONERS. (THESE WERE ALL THE APPOINT-  
MENTS WE ASKED FOR, EXCEPT FOR CHIEF MINISTER.) AT SHILLONG  
IT SEEMED THAT SOMEONE HAD PASSED THE WORD TO BE NICE TO US.  
ATTENDANTS AT THE GOVERNMENT HOTEL THERE WHO WERE COLD IN  
NOVEMBER WERE THIS TIME FRIENDLY AND ACCOMMODATING. THE  
MEGHALAYA MINISTER OF EDUCATION (WHO TOOK BURLEIGH ON A TOUR  
IN 1972 AND IN NOVEMBER TOLD US SADLY BY TELEPHONE THAT HE  
COULDN'T SEE US) RUSHED OVER TO CHAT.

6. ONLY THE CHIEF MINISTER OF ASSAM RAMAINED ALOOF. THE  
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PAGE 03 NEW DE 04102 261411Z

CHIEF SECRETARY TOLD US HE WAS AWAY, BUT HE WAS NOT. HE SENT  
A CORDIAL LETTER SAYING HE HOPED I ENJOYED VISITING HIS  
STATE AT THE SAME TIME THAT HE EXPRESSED HIS REGRETS AT NOT  
BEING ABLE TO MEET ME "DUE TO PREOCCUPATION". HE IS THE  
CHARMING FIGURE WHO TOLD JOURNALISTS BURLEIGH HAD "DISAPPEARED"  
FOR THREE DAYS DURING HIS 1972 VISIT JUST PRIOR TO BENGALI/  
ASSAMESE RIOTS IN STATE. THERE IS NO TELLING WHAT HE  
MIGHT SAY THIS TIME, ALTHOUGH THE MARCH 22 HINDUSTAN

TIMES PIECE WAS PROBABLY PLANTED BY HIM. FOR THE RECORD, WE WERE SCARCELY OUT OF SIGHT OF OUR CONTROL OFFICERS AND AT TIMES WERE CLOSELY "PROTECTED" BY SECURITY CONTINGENTS, E.G., TWENTY-FOUR ARMED GUARDS AT TEZPUR CIRCUIT HOUSE, ARMED POLICE ESCORTS FOR MOST OF TRIP BY ROAD THROUGH STATE.

7. WE LOCATED, I BELIEVE, JUST ABOUT ALL OF THE AMERIANS IN THE NORTHEAST, TEN OR TWELVE BAPTIST MEDICAL MISSIONARIES AND FAMILIES. WE CALLED ON MOST OF THEM--SOLID AND DURABLE TYPES. THEY ARE CONFINED TO ASSAM AND MEGHALAYA AND NOT ALLOWED INTO HILL STATES WHERE BAPTISM HAS MOST APPEAL, I.E., NAGALAND, MIZORAM, MANIPUR. THEY ARE BEING GRADUALLY SQUEEZED OUT, NO FOREIGN REPLACEMENTS ALLOWED, BUT THEY HAVE STAFFED THEIR HOSPITALS WELL WITH TALENTED INDIAN CHRISTIANS AND SEEM SATISFIED WITH THIS ACHIEVEMENT WHICH THEY THINK WILL LAST.

8. THE BRITISH, OF WHOM WE ENCOUNTERED SOME RELICS, ARE FADING FAST. THERE ARE SOME SIXTY-FIVE LEFT IN ASSAM, ON TEA ESTATES MOSTLY. THAT'S DOWN FROM OVER A THOUSAND TEN YEARS AGO AND ALMOST ALL THOSE REMAININT EXPECT TO DEPART WITHIN FIVE YEARS.

9. THE OVERRIDING PROBLEM IN UQSAM PERHAPS IS THE RISING POPULATION PRESSURE. THE STATE HAS THE HIGHEST DEMOGRAPHIC GORWTH RATE IN INDIA--3.7 PERCENT--REFLECTING RAPID NATURAL GROWTH AND CONTINUING IMMIGRATION FROM BANGLADESH AND NEPAL. THIS HAS CAUSED GRAVE ECONOMIC AND ETHIC/POLITICAL PROBLEMS WHICH CAN BE EXPTECTED TO WORSEN. IN RICE, THE PRINCIPLE CROP, ASSAM IS NOW BARELY SELF-SUFFICIENT AND DISTRICTS THAT WERE, UNTIL RECENTLY, SURPLUS, AND NOW DEFICIT. POWER IS SHORT. THE TEA INDUSTRY IS STAGNANT. OIL IS IMPORTANT BUT HANDLED BY THE CENTER (WITH A REBATE TO THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 NEW DE 04102 261411Z

STATE). TWO PROSPECTIVE PAPER MILLS WHICH WILL DRAW ON THE EXTENSIVE BAMBOO RESERVES PROMISE SOME ADDITIONAL EMPLOYMENT. BUT OVERALL THE TREND IS CLEARLY TOWARD INCREASED UNEMPLOYMENT IN ALL CLASSES.

10. GIVEN THIS SITUATION, THE ETHNIC MOSAIC OF ASSAM (AND IT IS STILL A MOSAIC DESPITE THE FACT THAT NAGALAND, MIZORAM, MEGHALAYA AND ARUNSCHAL HAVE BEEN LOPPED OFF OVER THE YEARS) FORMERLY OF INTEREST PRINCIPALLY TO ITINERANT ANTHROPOLOGISTS AND ICS/IAS OFFICERS, HAS NOW BECOME AN EXPLOSIVE POLITICAL PROBLEM. EVERY GROUP SEEMS INTENT ON ASSERTING ITSELF, ITS RIGHTS, ITS LANGUAGE, ITS CUSTOMS, ETC. THERE ARE SOME AGITATIONS GOING ON TO REDRAW BOUNDARIES WITH MEGHALAYA, MIZORAM, NAGALAND ALONG ETHNIC LINES. THERE IS A PLAINS TRIBAL MOVEMENT ALONG THE NORTHERN BANK OF

THE BRAHMAPUTRA FOR A SEPARATE STATE. OFFICIALS TELL US THESE ARE NOT SERIOUS AND THAT CURRENT BOUNDARIES WILL STAY. WE ARE NOT CONVINCED; THE MOMENTUM IS CLEARLY IN THE OTHER DIRECTION.

11. MORE SIGNIFICANT PERHAPS IS CONTINUING IMMIGRATION OF BENGALI MUSLIMS FROM BANGLADESH. ASSAM IS NOW AT LEAST ONE-QUARTER MUSLIM AND THE DIFFERENTIAL REPRODUCTION RATES PLUS IMMIGRATION COULD RESULT IN A MUSLIM-MAJORITY ASSAM WITHIN 12-15 YEARS. THESE ARE BENGALI-SPEAKING MUSLIMS IN A STATE WHICH IS ATTACHED TO THE REST OF INDIA BY ONLY A NARROW SEGMENT OF WEST BENGAL.

12. WE WANT TO CONTINUE TO ASSERT OUR INTEREST IN ANNUAL TRIPS TO NORTHEASTERN STATES AND ARE POUCHING PERMIT REQUESTS FOR TRIPURA AND MANIPUR THIS WEEK.  
PICKERING  
UNQUOTE  
MOYNIHAN

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** VISITS, PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT, POLITICAL LEADERS, MEETINGS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 26 MAR 1974  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** morefirh  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1974NEWDE04102  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D740065-0120  
**From:** NEW DELHI  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1974/newtext/t19740315/aaaaaniy.tel  
**Line Count:** 188  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION NEA  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 4  
**Previous Channel Indicators:**  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** morefirh  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 25 APR 2002  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <25 APR 2002 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <29 JUL 2002 by morefirh>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** ASSAM: TRIP REPORT  
**TAGS:** PFOR, IN, US, (MOYNIHAN, DANIEL P)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005